Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program

Participating Agencies

Camarillo

County of Ventura

Fillmore

Moorpark

Ojai

Oxnard

Port Hueneme

San Buenaventura

Santa Paula

Simi Valley

Thousand Oaks

Ventura County Watershed Protection District

January 9, 2014

Mr. Sam Unger, Executive Officer
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
320 4th Street, Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Subject: REPORT OF WASTE DISCHARGE FOR THE VENTURA COUNTYWIDE STORMWATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Dear Mr. Unger:

The Watershed Protection District (Principal Permittee), the County of Ventura, and the incorporated cities of Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks, (each a Permittee, and collectively known as Permittees), operate municipal storm drain systems and discharge stormwater and urban runoff pursuant to the countywide NPDES Permit (Order No. R4-2010-0108). This Permit, administered by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board), requires a Report of Waste Discharge (ROWD) to be submitted 180 days before the Permit expires on July 9, 2015. The attached Report of Waste Discharge serves as the application for renewal of the waste discharge requirements set forth in Order No. R4-2010-0108 and is submitted on behalf of the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Program (Ventura Program or Program).

Beyond meeting the Permit requirement, this ROWD serves to inform the Regional Board and the public on the accomplishments achieved by the Ventura Program, the individual Permittees, and the broader watershed management groups towards improving water quality in Ventura County, and includes the lessons learned over the last twenty years of monitoring and addressing runoff pollution, the challenges identified for the future along with recommended actions to help meet those challenges.

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Recommendations identified within the ROWD are based on the assumption that the Regional Board will develop the updated Permit for Ventura County based on the current MS4 Permit for Los Angeles County (Order R4-2012-0175), herein referred to as the LA Permit. Many of the recommendations are based on a foundational understanding of runoff quality across Ventura County and years of implementing stormwater programs.

Program History/Background

Two years before the first MS4 Permit for Ventura County was adopted in 1994, all ten cities, the County, and the Watershed Protection District joined together to secure funding and initiate stormwater quality programs. Since then, the permit has been renewed twice with each new permit successively increasing program requirements. The current third term permit included substantial changes, e.g., increased the monitoring requirements through the addition of 11 major outfall sites, prescribed Low Impact Development design standards and runoff retention requirements, and included eight Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) affecting the Region.

Since the adoption of the third term Permit, the Ventura Program has achieved many accomplishments in each of the program elements. A few of our key accomplishments include:

- Comprehensive assessment of more than ten years of monitoring data resulting in an improved understanding of baseline conditions, pollutants of concern, and water quality trends in the County's watersheds
- Development of a Water Quality Index to distill complex monitoring results into an easy to understand format
- Implementation of eight key special studies improving our understanding of local conditions and appropriate stormwater management
- Excellent water quality at beaches throughout Ventura County (receiving nearly all A grades during wet and dry weather from Heal the Bay)
- The Ventura Program conducted a strategic planning and visioning process to begin development of a long-term strategic plan for addressing water quality issues in the County
- Development and implementation of a revised Technical Guidance Manual for New and Significant Redevelopment
- Development of a Countywide Hydromodification Control Plan
- Initiation of a unified Countywide storm drain mapping project
- Extensive outreach and public participation with over 89 million impressions made since Permit adoption

Goals and Guiding Principles

Having implemented MS4 Permit programs for over 20 years, the Permittees have gained a thorough understanding of water quality throughout the County. Based on this experience and recognizing the challenges ahead, Permittees felt the need to develop a more proactive and comprehensive view of water quality management capable of addressing the complex water quality regulations facing the Program. The Permittees participated in a series of Strategic Planning Workshops and developed the following vision:

"Our vision of the future is a thriving community supportive of the integrative management, protection, and sustainable use of stormwater resources."

Through the visioning process and initiation of the ROWD, several common themes emerged that are threaded throughout the document. Key themes include:

- Programs should be focused and driven by receiving water priorities and pollutants of concern, and be prioritized by their effectiveness in reducing those pollutants.
- Flexibility should be provided where possible, recognizing that the watersheds in the County each have unique water quality challenges and all are at different stages in watershed planning.
- Monitoring should be question-driven and focused on obtaining key information, with a well-defined purpose and goals for the use of the data.
- An achievable pathway for permit compliance is necessary.

Permittees developed a set of guiding principles for the ROWD that are centered on these core themes. These principles are more specific to the local watersheds and we hope that each is reflected in the new MS4 Permit for the Ventura Program.

- The Program supports an improved watershed focus and more holistic management where appropriate; however, considering the unique nature of each watershed within the Region, it is necessary to keep all program planning and implementation options available.
- Program efforts should have the option to be coordinated with existing watershed plans and other entities that affect water quality in the region as appropriate. Permit language should not hinder holistic watershed management.
- Where watershed programs are in place, existing efforts should be allowed to replace permit requirements if equivalent.
- There should be an increased emphasis on strategic planning, including the ability to prioritize and implement actions to focus on identified pollutants of concern. Permit language should be supportive of these concepts, and requirements that divert resources from those priorities should be eliminated.
- The Program supports the evolution of MS4 program elements through the adaptive management process. The Permit should facilitate meaningful, timely assessments that will lead to improved program efficiency and effectiveness through integration and streamlining where possible.
- The Program supports the use of the best available science that leads to informed stormwater management and public policy decisions. Monitoring and reporting requirements need to be limited to those elements that provide information that will help answer key questions, inform management decisions, and should be coordinated where appropriate (e.g., integrate TMDL and MS4 monitoring).

Watersheds and Water Quality in Ventura County

The Santa Clara River, Calleguas Creek, and Ventura River watersheds currently have active watershed planning processes that include a diverse set of stakeholders that go beyond stormwater management agencies. These efforts are supporting the identification of watershed priorities and collaborative, multi-benefit solutions to those priorities. Each watershed is in a different stage of the watershed planning process, but each process has resulted in increased collaboration and stakeholder involvement and a better understanding of watershed conditions, needs, and priorities. Through watershed based planning, monitoring, and BMP implementation activities, the watersheds have been successful in improving water quality in order to protect beneficial uses.

Receiving Water Trends

Improvements in water quality have been demonstrated through a comprehensive assessment and statistical analysis of more than ten years of receiving water monitoring data. Separate trend analyses for wet and dry-weather events were performed for Ventura County's three mass emission stations using data collected between 2001 and 2014, showing many constituent concentrations have decreased since 2001. These include bacteria, nutrients, conventional parameters, organics, pesticides, and metals. Although four out of the 217 monitored constituents exhibit increasing concentration trends, it should be noted that none of these are exceeding water quality standards, or even getting close. Key findings from this analysis include:

- Fecal indicator bacteria are high priority pollutants in stormwater and nonstorm water, and sources of bacteria are notably hard to identify and control. Therefore, the decreasing indicator bacteria concentrations observed in some watersheds are very encouraging. Dry-weather E. coli and Enterococcus concentrations have significantly decreased in Calleguas Creek since 2001, to the point that water quality objectives are no longer exceeded at the Mass Emissions Site. Decreasing total coliform and E. coli wet-weather concentrations were also observed in the Santa Clara River.
- Dry and wet-weather concentrations of the pesticide diazinon have decreased in Calleguas Creek, to the point that concentrations higher than the Department of Fish and Game aquatic life criteria have not been observed since 2006 for wet weather and since 2007 for dry weather. Also, exceedances of TMDL Waste Load Allocations for diazinon have not been exceeded since then. Concentrations of dacthal, used as a pre-emergent herbicide, have increased in Calleguas Creek during dry weather and in the Santa Clara River during wet weather.
- Concentrations of many metals have decreased since 2001 at all mass emission stations. Decreasing dry-weather trends were observed for chromium, copper, nickel and zinc for both total and dissolved fractions, at most stations. Dissolved concentrations of these metals decreased in some cases for wet-weather as well. Selenium concentrations have also decreased in many cases since 2001. Concentrations decreases for lead were mostly observed during dry weather, while those for iron and cadmium during wet weather.

Recommendations

Programmatic

Experience gained over the last twenty years of implementing stormwater programs has been used to direct efforts and improve effectiveness within the confines of Permit compliance. That is to say, the Permittees hold Permit compliance as the priority, and resources are directed toward compliance first. However, other potentially effective measures may not always be implemented due to the inflexibility and resource intensiveness of Permit requirements.

Even so, the Permittees have accomplished many achievements beyond the Permit requirements. Key areas have been identified where improvements in the Permit structure or language would allow the Permittees to create more effective and efficient programs for reducing pollutants discharged from their MS4s and are further detailed with logical rationale and justification in the ROWD.

- Program Management: A well-defined pathway for compliance necessary to provide assurance that extensive implementation efforts will result in compliance with Receiving Water Limitations; Flexibility and scalability of program elements is necessary to perform true adaptive management;
- Public Information and Participation: Identified pollutants of concern should guide efforts; Permit should allow Permittees flexibility to use source ID studies to identify target audiences.
- Industrial / Commercial Discharges: The Permit should provide flexibility to identify additional critical sources beyond those listed in the Permit.
- New Development and Re-development: The recently developed Technical Guidance Manual (TGM) should guide land development programs and new Permit requirements should not add to or conflict with the TGM.
- Construction: The Permit should provide for reasonable site inspection frequencies based on risk to receiving waters.
- Illicit Discharges: The Permit should allow for focused source identification efforts to replace less effective approaches of illicit discharge screening.

Monitoring and Assessment

The Ventura Program has been performing monitoring at key receiving water locations within the watershed for more than ten years, and multiple outfalls since 2009. Through this combination of monitoring, the Program has a solid understanding of the water quality in receiving waters and in the MS4s. This current monitoring effort should be considered the basis for future monitoring, and the existing data should be evaluated for ability to answer new questions prior to requirements for additional monitoring. Building on this experience, the monitoring provisions of the new Permit should:

- Be question-driven, ensuring monitoring is designed to provide useful and necessary data;
- Include flexibility to allow programs to focus on prioritized pollutants; and,
- Allow regional monitoring and reporting if proposed and approved by the Executive Officer.

Watershed Management

The Program supports the inclusion of a watershed management approach as an option for planning and implementation within the next Ventura County MS4 Permit. Inclusion of a watershed management approach as a component of the permit facilitates efficient planning and timely implementation of effective programs and practices to address the highest priority water quality challenges facing the Ventura Program. We support the inclusion of the watershed management program as an option within the permit rather than as a strict requirement to provide flexibility for individual permittees to select the methods of planning and implementation appropriate for their agency. In an effort to continue to improve on existing permitting efforts, the Ventura Program has identified several key modifications to the watershed management program element of the Los Angeles MS4 Permit. These recommendations are briefly described below:

- The Permit should allow for the use of existing watershed management planning efforts to replace some or all of the permit requirements if equivalent.
- The water quality priority prioritization process in the permit should be modified to both allow for existing watershed prioritization processes to be used and to clarify the prioritization process for receiving water limitation violations.
- The reasonable assurance analysis requirements should be modified to ensure MS4s are not required to demonstrate that reductions solely from MS4s will bring the waterbody into compliance with water quality standards and to be better aligned with the prioritization allowed within the permit.
- The source assessment requirements should be modified to focus on potential MS4 sources.
- The Permit should ensure that the appropriate TMDL compliance schedules are included and modify the requirements for development of schedules for new receiving water limitation violations.
- The Permit should allow for 85th percentile as a compliance mechanism regardless of how the 85th percentile storm is captured.
- The timing of the adaptive management requirements should be changed to be consistent with the permit cycles.
- The Permit should provide a pathway to allow the WMPs to be a compliance mechanism for final TMDL effluent limitations.
- Action levels should be removed from the Permit, or only be used as one of several pollutant prioritization tools.

In closing, we wish to express our strong desire and willingness to work with Regional Board staff to craft the next MS4 Permit for the Ventura Program. A collaborative process will allow the Permittees and Regional Board staff to clearly communicate their needs and expectations, foster improved communication, trust, and relationships leading to a better outcome for all involved. At the end of the process, we hope to have a permit that provides a clear and achievable path for Permittees to demonstrate compliance that will lead to improved collaboration, innovative management, enhanced understanding of watershed dynamics, and ultimately continue to improve water quality in our watersheds.

I certify under penalty of law this document and all attachments were prepared under my direction or supervision in accordance with a system designed to assure that qualified personnel properly gather and evaluate the information submitted. Based on my inquiry of the person or persons who manage the system, or those persons directly responsible for gathering the information, the information submitted is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information, including the possibility of fine and imprisonment.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the ROWD and the recommendations included herein. If you have questions, please contact me at (805) 654-5051.

Sincerely,

Gerhardt J. Hubner
On Behalf of the Entire Ventura Countywide
Stormwater Management Program

Attachment: Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality management Program – Report of Waste Discharge, January 2015